

ROADSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES, VISUAL RESOURCES & SIGNAGE

In addition to the FHWA's interim policy for the National Scenic Byways Program, these documents are of interest for **planning, construction, and maintenance** of the scenic and historic byways in Colorado – CDOT Roadway Design Guide, CDOT Project Development Manual, Environmental Stewardship Guide, CDOT Visual Resource Impact Assessment Guidelines, Federal Lands Memorandum of Understanding, CDOT Guide Signing Policies and Procedures Manual, and CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual. Most importantly, byways should consult with the CDOT Region Environmental Section located at <https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental>.

National Scenic Byways Program

FHWA's May 18, 1995 interim policy, Section 9. Corridor Management Plans (CMP), lists the 14 items required in a CMP, plus 3 additional items for All-American Roads. This document provides the state's guidance and references for these three required CMP items or sections, including Maintenance & Enhancement, Outdoor Advertising, and Sign Plans as follows:

(3) A strategy for maintaining and enhancing those intrinsic qualities. The level of protection for different parts of a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road can vary, with the highest level of protection afforded those parts which most reflect their intrinsic values. All nationally recognized scenic byways should, however, be maintained with particularly high standards, not only for travelers' safety and comfort, but also for preserving the highest levels of visual integrity and attractiveness.

(10) A demonstration of compliance with all existing local, State, and Federal laws on the control of outdoor advertising.

(11) A signage plan that demonstrates how the State will insure and make the number and placement of signs more supportive of the visitor experience.

Resource: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/scenic_byways/

CDOT Roadway Design Guide & Project Development Manual

The Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Process is an approach to use Decision Science principles and can be followed on all projects from corridor-wide planning to construction change orders. (CDOT Landscape Architecture Manual 2014, Revised 2020, section 1.3.2) The level of work to achieve the CSS process can vary. While some projects are minor in nature, large system changing project will require a more robust decision making effort. It consists of 6 six steps and includes community stakeholder and public input.

First, CDOT has committed to using the CSS process for engineering projects, as noted in both the 2005 Chief Engineer Policy Memo 26 and formalized in the CDOT Roadway Design Guide (Section 20.1.6 Context Sensitive Solutions) and Project Development Manual, Rev. June 29, 2020 (Section 8.13 – Context Sensitive Solutions):

Key elements of CSS (from National Cooperative Highway Research Program, NCHRP Report 480):

1. The project satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and amended as warranted as the project develops.
2. The project is a safe facility both for the use and the community.
3. The project is in harmony with the community and preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area.
4. The project exceeds the expectations of both the designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.
5. The project involves efficient and effective use of resources (such as time, budget, and community) of all involved parties.
6. The project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.
7. The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community.

Secondly, the CDOT Roadway Design Guide, Chapter 2.7 ENVIRONMENT cross-references: See Section 3 (Environment) of the CDOT Project Development Manual (3.14 Social Resources: Visual Resources) and directs the engineer to consult with the Region Environmental Section for information on environmental issues. Visual resources are evaluated by their uniqueness and the strong emotion they inspire in human viewers. Such special places often provide a sense of community to the inhabitants of an area and may attract tourism and drive its economy. Visual resources are regulated by the FHWA and CDOT.

Social resources, specifically visual resources include features that define the character of an area. These can be natural features, vistas, or view-sheds, but also urban characteristics such as architecture, skylines, or other characteristics that create a visual definition.

Resources:

https://www.codot.gov/business/designsupport/bulletins_manuals/cdot-roadway-design-guide-2018

https://www.codot.gov/admin/business/designsupport/bulletins_manuals/2013-project-development-manual

<https://www.codot.gov/business/designsupport/policy-memos/archived-policy-memos>

<https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture>

CDOT Environmental Stewardship Guide

In addition, for non-engineering projects such as CDOT maintenance work and those that CDOT issues permits for to use the transportation system for access, or utility installation, etc. CDOT has committed to operating under a standard which considers the impact of actions on the environmental and community. This commitment to the public is embodied in the CDOT Environmental Stewardship Guide:

CDOT will design, construct, maintain and operate the statewide transportation system in a manner which helps preserve Colorado's historic and scenic heritage and fits harmoniously into communities and the natural environment.

Resource: <https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/guidance-standards>

Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines

Visual and scenic values are specifically addressed in CDOT's Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines. This guide gives high value to Scenic and Historic Byways in the transportation system of Colorado, as it explains how to evaluate a project's impact to the visual character of the surrounding area and the road system. In the guidelines, Scenic Byways are considered a high level of viewer sensitivity to changes. Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways are important resources that have been designated by the Colorado Transportation Commission. Also specific byways are designated as follows: National Scenic Byways (America's Byways®) by the US Secretary of Transportation; National Forest Scenic Byways by the U.S. Forest Service; and Backcountry Byways by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Guidelines apply to Colorado actions involving:

- CDOT sponsorship of projects with state and/or federal funding
- Local agency sponsorship of projects that involve state highways and/or project development funding sources that prompt CDOT oversight
- Third-party use of highway right-of-way (ROW), permitted by CDOT
- CDOT property management

Resource: <https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture/visual-resources/visual-impact-assessment>

Federal Lands Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (2016)

Supplemental Visual and Scenic Resources Guide for CDOT Maintenance and Operations (APPENDIX A-3)

CDOT has agreed to implement project-specific design protocols to support USFS and BLM management plan standards and guidelines for visual and scenic quality. These protocols help soften visual impacts associated with highways and their appurtenances.

Topics discussed in this overview apply to new construction, reconstruction and maintenance projects by CDOT and do not apply to existing conditions. Health, safety, and welfare will take precedent concerning temporary replacement of the items in this appendix.

General Requirements

1. All projects will avoid and/or minimize disturbance to vegetation. All disturbed areas will be revegetated as appropriate.
2. Color selection will be determined during the NEPA process. In this document, Federal Standard colors are referenced.
3. All signposts, hardware, and related appurtenances, including back of signs, will be either painted Federal Standard 595 Color FS 20059 or, if metal, stained dark brown.
4. Delineator posts will be Forest Service brown (Federal Standard 595 FS 20059) or dark green in color (Interstate Green, in accordance with Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices [MUTCD] Color Specifications [23 CFR 655]).

5. All exposed concrete and shotcrete surfaces will require a color-treatment. The preferred method of color-treatment is the use of stain or colored concrete to achieve an appearance agreeable to the USFS or BLM.
6. CDOT Maintenance will get guidance from the CDOT landscape architect for all maintenance activities, including standard colors, stains, visual impacts, reflectivity, hydrologic features, sound attenuation and landscaping.
7. CDOT landscape architect will consult with USFS and BLM landscape architects for all substitutions and replacements.

Resources:

<https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/intergovernmental-agreements>

CDOT Guide Signing Policies and Procedures Manual

This manual conforms to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which contains the standards and guidelines for the design and installation of highway signing. Specifically, this document provides the signing policy and procedures for the Scenic Byway marker, including the Scenic Byway "Blue Columbine" marker, byway name, directional arrow, and if at the beginning or end of a route shall include "Begin" or "End" plaques, respectively.

References:

<https://www.codot.gov/programs/signs>

CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual

CDOT regulates outdoor advertising along the Colorado state highway system and information is located in the CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual. Under state and federal law, CDOT issues permits approving specific information signs (LOGO) on interstates, freeways and expressways, and tourist-oriented directional signs (TODS) on non-interstate highways.

Rules Governing Outdoor Advertising in Colorado (2 CCR 601-3) in section 9.00 Advertising Devices on Scenic Byways [§ 43-1-419, C.R.S.; 23 U.S.C. 131(s)], such as billboards:

- A. A Scenic Byway is a road designated as such by the Colorado Transportation Commission along a Controlled Route.
- B. No new Advertising Device shall be erected along a Scenic Byway that is visible from the Controlled Route with the exception of:
 1. Official Signs;
 2. On-Premise Signs; and
 3. Directional Signs.
- C. Existing Advertising Devices along Scenic Byways which are in compliance with state and federal law and these Rules may continue to be maintained; however, they will have the status of Nonconforming Signs.

D. For purposes of this section, an Advertising Device shall be considered to be Visible from a designated highway if it is plainly visible to the driver of a vehicle who is proceeding in a legally designated direction and traveling at the posted speed. [23 C.F.R. 750.153 (j); § 43-1-403(17), C.R.S.]

E. The designation of a Scenic Byway shall specify by Global Positioning System or other technology the precise location of the Scenic Byway.

Resources:

<https://www.codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/standard-and-specifications/manuals-and-guidelines>